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Vote counts will take hours: official

Province's new rules mean results won't be ready on election night

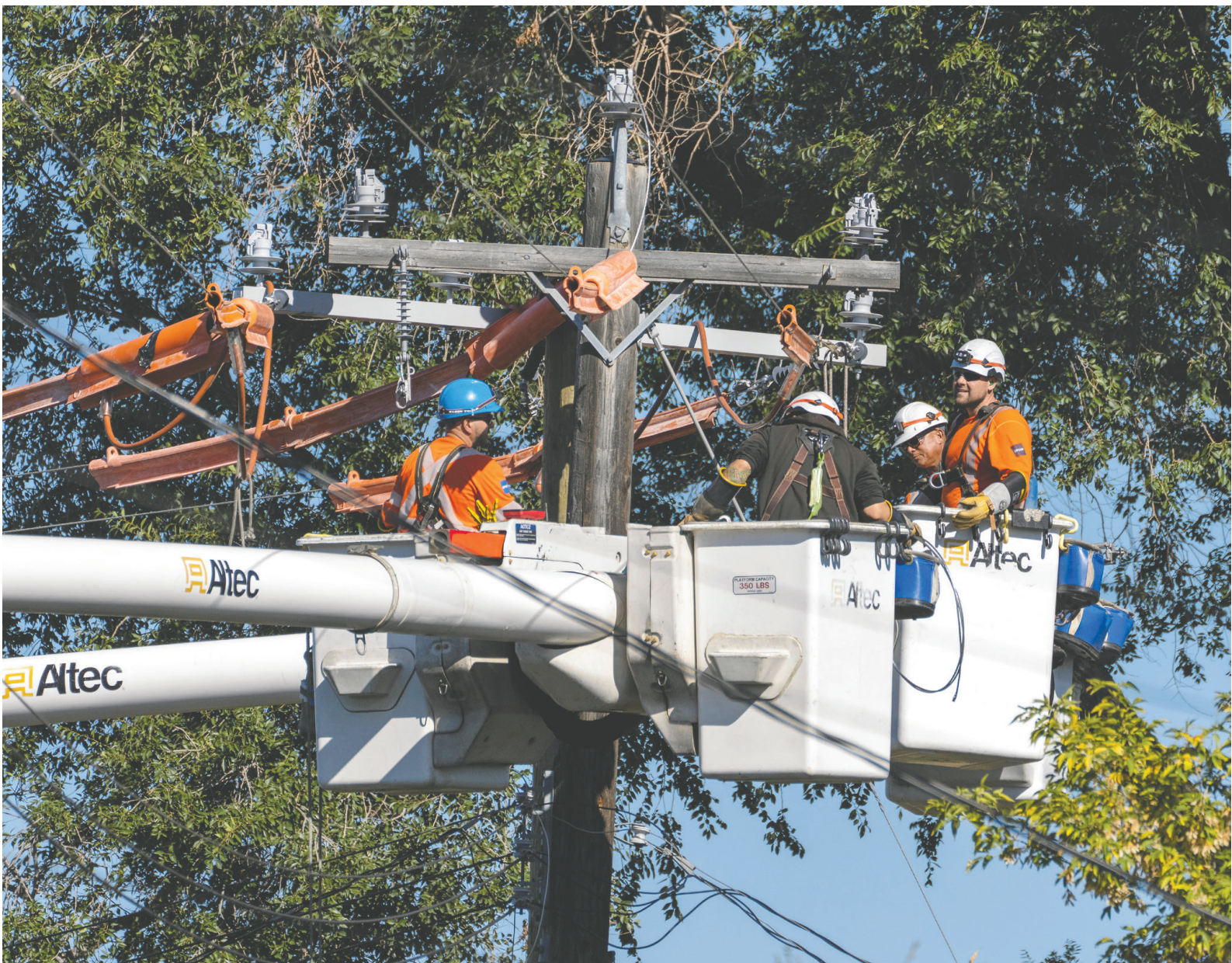
STEVEN SANDOR

The polls will close the night of Oct. 20. But chances are good that Edmontonians won't know who their mayor-elect is until at least the next day. "I would say that's a reasonable estimate," said Aileen Giesbrecht, the returning officer for Edmonton Elections, when asked if the identity of the winning mayoral candidate won't be known on the

night of the election. New provincial legislation requires all ballots to be hand-counted. Edmonton Elections had been using tabulators for two decades and never received any complaints about potential errors. In 2021, some election races were called as early as 8:30 p.m. This year, Giesbrecht expects counting to be in full swing well into the night. "We will be hand-counting ballots, so that will be a separate

ballot for every race at the voting stations," said Giesbrecht. "I hope to have that done and locked up, I'm saying by midnight." But, outside of the 222 polling stations, there's a central count station where advance ballots as well as votes from hospitals and other institutions are kept. While some stations should be done by the witching hour, the central station likely won't be. And that will mean winners likely won't be declared on election night itself. "Preliminary results will not be known for all races until the next day," said Giesbrecht. Giesbrecht spoke at a worker

recruitment event held Tuesday at NorQuest College. About 5,000 positions need to be filled for the advance ballots and election night. Those 5,000 positions are expected to be filled by 4,000 people, as some will take on more than one task. About 1,000 of those positions still need to be filled, many of them to help with the counts after the polls close. Because the work is expected to go past midnight, all elections staff must be 18 years of age or older. Giesbrecht said this election will require about 1,000 more workers than the 2021 vote. SEE ELECTION ON A4



GREG SOUTHAM

STILL ON THE LINE

A crew of Epcor workers performs some maintenance on high voltage power lines in an Ottewell neighbourhood back alley Tuesday.

Mayoral debate begins to reveal differences among contenders



KEITH GEREIN
Commentary

The five contenders who took part in Friday's big televised mayoral debate were played onto the stage by the 1980s standard Eye of the Tiger — a bit of a forced cliché, perhaps, considering the 90-minute bout that followed wasn't exactly a Rocky-style slugfest. There were no blackened eyes, bloody noses or cracked ribs, not

even the metaphorical variety. In what was mostly a civil affair, the worst damage inflicted was perhaps a few bruised egos. That's not to say it was uneventful. In fact, all five participants gamely got into the fray in discussing real matters of consequence for Edmontonians, who, in turn, got their first real opportunity to try to find some clarity in a race that has yet to distinguish any front-runners. (Kudos to the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce and president Doug Griffiths for organizing the event.) Indeed, the debate was one the first moments of the campaign where we started to see a little daylight emerge among the can-

didates, who have been mostly talking about very similar things in very similar ways. ANDREW KNACK While no one performed poorly, the person who arguably had the best night was Coun. Andrew Knack, largely because he managed to articulate a distinct position in a few key areas. On city finances in particular, it felt like he stood alone, accusing some of his rivals of not being honest about how tax cuts and freezes would necessitate cuts and freezes to services and infrastructure. While saying he would continue to look for savings, he also pushed back against the idea that it was "frivolous" to fund libraries and recreation centres in a rapidly growing city. "Part of attracting businesses here is building communities that people want to live in as well," he said. SEE GEREIN ON A5

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